

Substance Abuse Signs, How to Help, and Harm Reduction Techniques

The Board of Health will be bringing information on the ever-growing epidemic of substance abuse which is growing exponentially across the not only in Massachusetts but across the country.

HOW TO ADMINISTER NARCAN TO VICTIM OF OVERDOSE:

Administering NARCAN is very simple to do; for information on how to determine if someone is overdosing and how to administer NARCAN, click [here](#).

NARCAN AVAILABILITY AT LOCAL PHARMACIES UPDATE:

Many pharmacies now carry NARCAN and in many cases, you do not need a prescription. Both [CVS](#) and [Rite Aid](#) locally both carry NARCAN.

Like many states, Massachusetts is experiencing a prescription drug and heroin epidemic. In 2014 alone, more than 1,200 residents died of an overdose; see the list of [cities and towns hit the hardest](#) according to the Dept. of Public Health and the U.S. Census. Nationally, there are 52,000+ overdose deaths in our country. Overdose deaths now outnumber those due to car accidents. Not only is this a public safety issue – it is a serious public health issue. Working together, community member, law enforcement, harm reduction agencies, public health officials, and other experienced professionals can commit to collaboratively and collectively helping to end this epidemic. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reports on the statistics often; please check the site for the latest information by clicking [here](#).

Recent deaths from overdose are attributed to [fentanyl](#) and [carfentanil](#), much more powerful substances that are now mixed with heroin. Whereas one dose of NARCAN may help revive a victim of a heroin overdose, it now takes several doses of NARCAN to help revive them if these substances are mixed with the heroin. Responders must now wear protective gear as these substances are so powerful that touching or breathing them in can result in an overdose or possibly death. To see the difference in potency of heroin and fentanyl, click [here](#).

It's important to know how to identify and respond to substance abuse so that we can help eradicate the diseases that go along with substance abuse. It's difficult to know how and why people become addicted to drugs or other substances. Often, we mistake those who use drugs as lacking moral principles or willpower and that they could stop their drug use simply by choosing to. In reality, drug addiction is a very complex disease, and quitting usually takes more than good intentions or a strong will. Drugs can alter the brain in ways that make quitting hard, even for those who have a strong desire to. Research has been helpful in learning how drugs affect the brain and have found treatments that can help people recover from drug addiction and lead productive lives.